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BOOK REVIEWS

METHODS AND PRINCIPLES

The Psychology of Insanity. BERNARD HART. Cambridge University Press, 1919. XII, 176 pp.

Apparently many ethnologists are unable to resist the lure of psycho-analysis and the psycho-analysts are notoriously prone to correlate their psychiatric data with the findings of the ethnologist. Accordingly it seems desirable that the student of cultural anthropology should familiarize himself with the fundamental concepts of the new sister science through some approved manual rather than through incidental references in the press and current magazines, from which he might readily derive the notion that psycho-analysis belongs to the eminently disreputable cultural stratum of Greenwich Village and Bolshevism. The book here offered to us, representing the third printing of the third edition, may be fairly described as a pedagogical masterpiece. In the brief space of less than two-hundred pages Dr. Hart succeeds in giving an extremely lucid exposition of such basic notions as Dissociation, Complexes, Conflict, Repression. He is likely to correct the popular belief that the subject centers in a discussion of sex, for this topic is barely mentioned. The treatment of rationalization ought to prove especially stimulating to ethnologists, who have dealt with the comparable phenomenon of secondary interpretation. There is also food for reflection in the concluding sentences, which thus dispose of much half-baked eugenic effort:

Such considerations suggest . . . that those enthusiastic reformers who would initiate drastic legislation to obtain selective breeding may reasonably be asked to proceed with caution. For it is at least conceivable that our present complacent assurance that every individual must live and act within the arbitrary limits assigned by conventional and purely artificial standards of conduct, or else be segregated from society, may be fallacious and inimical to the best development of the race. It is possible that insanity, or a part of insanity, will prove to be less dependent upon intrinsic defects of the individual than on the conditions in which he has to live, and the future may determine that it is not the individual who must be eliminated, but the conditions which must be modified.

ROBERT H. LOWIE